



File Code: 1950; 2760

Date: March 19, 2015

Greetings:

The Bighorn National Forest (BNF) is initiating the environmental planning and analysis to withdraw approximately 4,513 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands from the General Mining laws for twenty years in order to protect and preserve significant existing heritage resources and American Indian spiritual values within the formally designated *Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark*.

Your comments for this proposal will help to identify issues and concerns related to the proposed action, and develop alternatives. I encourage you to take time to consider the proposal and to submit your comments.

The purpose and need of the proposed mineral withdrawal is to protect and preserve significant existing heritage resources and American Indian spiritual values within the formally designated *Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark*. Approximately 4,513 acres of National Forest System (NFS) land is proposed to be withdrawn from the location and entry under the General Mining Laws, as amended. The land has been and will remain open to such forms of disposition allowed by law on NFS land and to mineral leasing.

Heritage resources include artifacts, structures, or sites made by people or natural features that acquire historic value through human activities. In 1970, the 110 acre *Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark* was recognized as archeologically significant because of the large and well preserved Medicine Wheel. However, almost 40 years of archeological investigations, ethnographic studies, and consultation with Native American elders indicated the need to refine the Landmark. The new area was formally designated in 2011.

The project area is located 35 miles east of Lovell, Wyoming and approximately 75 miles west of Sheridan, Wyoming, within Big Horn County, Wyoming, within the Bighorn National Forest (see enclosed plat).

Based upon the effects of the environmental analysis, the Recommending Forest Service official will transmit a recommendation to the Bureau of Land Management. The Secretary of Interior approves the decision on the proposed withdrawal and publishes a Notice of Decision in the Federal Register; therefore, the Forest Service recommendation is not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 218). The Recommending Forest Service official for this assessment will be the Regional Forester, Rocky Mountain Region.

Written, faxed, hand-delivered, oral and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of a legal notice in the Casper Star Tribune. The publication date in the Casper Star Tribune is the exclusive means for calculating the comment



period for this proposal. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. I anticipate that the legal notice for this project will appear in the Casper Star Tribune shortly following the date on which this letter is signed.

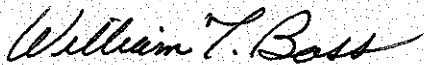
Written comments may be submitted to: Forest Supervisor, 2013 Eastside 2nd Street, Sheridan, WY 82801. You may also hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. E-mail comments may be sent to comments-bighorn@fs.fed.us. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone (307) 674-2656 or (307) 674-2636, or in person.

Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this project. The information will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For more information about this project, please contact Gayle Laurent at (307) 674-2656, or Dave McKee at (307) 674-2636.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM T. BASS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

